



**SUPPLY  
LINE**

## War Work

Canadian and **Allied** military forces grew rapidly during the Second World War. This increased demand for everything from airplanes, ships and guns to vehicles, raw materials and food. By 1945, Canada was the fourth-largest Allied producer of war supplies. It sent almost three-quarters of what it produced to other Allied countries.

### Factory Production

New factories opened in cities and towns across Canada, while others were repaired and expanded. They produced everything from uniforms to tanks. Transformed automobile factories made Canada the main supplier of small and medium-sized motor vehicles to the British Commonwealth.

The aircraft industry grew to nearly 116,000 workers, including around 30,000 women. Shipyards built, repaired and maintained vessels. Some shipyards were on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

Others were on the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. At their peak, Canadian shipyards employed more than 100,000 workers.

Unemployment was at 10% in 1939 but dropped to almost zero by 1943. Many workers joined unions, seeking better pay and working conditions, and sometimes going on strike. At first, the federal government tried to limit the power of unions. Workers' actions, including strikes, convinced the government to protect the right to unionize. The government also required employers to recognize unions.

### Feeding Canada and Its Allies

The war created a huge demand for food. Canadian farmers increased production, although it was hard to find workers. Students, military personnel on leave and prisoners of war provided temporary help.

Compulsory military service for farmers' sons and farm workers was sometimes delayed. Military personnel from farm families could also get special leave to help on the farm.

Canada provided essential foods to Britain and many other Allied countries in a time of great need. For example, it sent 1.5 billion kilograms of bacon and more than 325 million kilograms

of cheddar cheese to Great Britain. Food companies produced dehydrated vegetables, and powdered eggs and milk. They were less tasty but easier to ship and store.

## Natural Resources

Many natural resources were essential to the war effort. Communities were built or expanded around resources.

Canada's timber industry provided wood for pulp and paper, aircraft and chemical production. Mines and ore-processing plants fed steel and aluminum mills.

They were essential for making tanks, ammunition, aircraft and ships. Canada provided almost all of the nickel needed by the Allies. It also met about 40% of aluminum needs. Coal was important for industry, transportation and heating. Canadian miners extracted more than one million tonnes of it during the war.

## A Lasting Transformation

Wartime growth helped create prosperity for many people after the war. Factories were converted to produce items for use in peacetime. People began buying things that had been unavailable during the war, and that increased demand for Canadian goods.

Natural-resource development begun during the war continued afterwards. Since these activities often affected the environment, pollution and environmental damage would become an issue in the decades following the war.

## Vocabulary

### Allied:

The countries, including Canada, that joined together in opposing the Axis powers during the Second World War. The largest Allied nations were the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union and China.

# Timeline

**OCTOBER 1939**

121,000 men and women are working in Canada's war industries.

**JUNE 1940**

The *National Resources Mobilization Act* gives the federal government the authority to control where people can work, and the type of work they can do.

**APRIL 1941**

Ontario announces a "Farm Service Force" to provide help to farmers.

**OCTOBER 1943**

More than 1.1 million men and women are now working in Canadian war industries.

**FEBRUARY 1944**

Wartime Labour Relations Regulations lead to the formal recognition of labour unions by the federal government, and require employers to negotiate with unions.

**1945**

Canadian Red Cross Society volunteers have packed more than 16 million care parcels for Allied prisoners of war over the course of the war.